



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 February 2024

by Martin H Seddon BSc MPhil DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 28th February 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/D3125/D/23/3335920

16 Stonesfield Road, Combe, Oxfordshire OX29 8PE

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mrs Katharine Groves against the decision of West Oxfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 23/02184/HHD, dated 13 August 2023, was refused by notice dated 3 October 2023.
 - The development proposed is a single storey timber lodge as workshop outbuilding in front garden domestic curtilage.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed, and planning permission is granted for a single storey timber lodge as workshop outbuilding in front garden domestic curtilage at 16 Stonesfield Road, Combe, Oxfordshire OX29 8PE in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 23/02184/HHD, dated 13 August 2023, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: plans and elevations 100/730/2023, block plan 100/731/2023 and location plan 100/732/2023.
 - 2) The existing frontage hedge shall be maintained to a minimum height of 3 metres at all times.
 - 3) If any of the plants within the existing frontage hedge are removed, or the local planning authority is informed in writing by a professionally qualified arboriculturist that the hedge is dead, dying or dangerous or otherwise in need of replacement, details of a scheme for replacement plants of a species and size, and to a timescale, shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Preliminary Matters

2. The development had been completed prior to the application to the Council. I am advised that there was a previous outbuilding at the site which was demolished.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the street scene.

Reasons

4. No.16 Stonesfield Road is a two-storey semi-detached dwelling located within a residential area. Stonesfield Road has dwellings of varying form and design at each side of the highway. Its verdant character derives from the mainly open front gardens and presence of trees and shrubs.
5. The Council considers that the development will conserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural beauty. I see no reason to disagree in view of the built-up residential nature of the site location.
6. There is an existing outbuilding in the front garden of 11 Stonesfield Road. The Council has advised that the structure was originally granted permission as a car port. More recently it was clad in timber. The Council determined in February 2023 that the cladding did not require permission and granted a Certificate of Lawfulness for the outbuilding, although it indicated that it was likely that an original application for a clad garage would not have been granted permission in that location.
7. The circumstances of the appeal proposal differ from those at 11 Stonesfield Road as there is a conifer hedge along most of the frontage to the appeal site. The hedge is around 4 metres in height and approximately two metres in width. The workshop is a low building with a shallow pitched corrugated roof and clad in timber, with a ridge height of around 2.5 metres. Consequently, the workshop is very difficult to see from Stonesfield Road, with only glimpses of the eastern gable end of the building visible down the adjacent driveway. There is screening from a substantial hedge along the boundary with the adjoining semi-detached dwelling. Views from the east are also blocked by the long western elevation of 14 Stonesfield Road.
8. The Council's reasons for refusal contend that the workshop is out of scale, overly prominent and visually intrusive. However, the workshop is relatively small when compared to the two-storey host dwelling from which it is set back. I find that the workshop has no significant harmful visual impact, because the amount of screening is considerable in its extent, largely blocking views from the public highway.
9. The Council considered that the presence of the frontage hedge could not be guaranteed in perpetuity, and in its opinion a condition requiring its maintenance would be difficult to enforce. However, the original permission for the car port at 11 Stonesfield Road included the following condition, in the interest of the visual amenity of the street scene: "The existing hedge along the north boundary of the site shall be retained at a height of not less than 2 metres and any plants which die shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of a similar species and shall be retained thereafter."
10. The Council has suggested a similar, but more detailed condition for the frontage hedge at 16 Stonesfield Road, in the event of the appeal being

allowed. I consider that such a condition would be appropriate subject to modification of the suggested wording.

11. I find therefore, that subject to a condition confirming the approved plans, and appropriate conditions for retention and, if necessary, replanting of the front boundary hedge, the proposal would have no significant harmful effect on the character and appearance of the streetscene. The development would therefore fail to conflict with policies OS2, OS4 and H6 of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan which seek to ensure sustainability, high quality design and development which respects the character of the surrounding area. It would also meet the design objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Conclusion

12. I have taken all other matters raised into account. For the reasons given above the appeal is allowed subject to conditions.

Martin H Seddon

INSPECTOR